



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

alter H. Boyd, Press Officer
m. Drew Dearnaley, Assistant Press Officer

Telephone: (212) 867-8400

80051

February 21, 1980

COUNCIL DEBATES

DRAFT ISSUES

GREENWICH, Conn. -- The Episcopal Church's Executive Council struggled recently to implement a General Convention statement on draft registration in the face of growing concern over military conscription.

At its annual meeting at Seabury House here Feb. 13-15, the 44-member Council passed two resolutions designed to define Church policy and encourage staff response to counseling and registration needs. Both were based on actions by the 1979 Convention opposing reimplementa-tion of a peacetime conscription and encouraging conscientious objectors to register as such with the Church.

The first resolution was introduced by the Council's Standing Committee on Education for Mission and Ministry and encourages the Administrative Group -- the senior executives of the Episcopal Church Center staff -- to "coordinate and increase to the extent necessary" the Church's response to the Convention actions. The action was a substitute for a resolution which had actually called for the addition of staff to undertake the work.

Committee chairman, the Rt. Rev. Donald J. Parsons, Bishop of Quincy, explained that the change was made to encourage flexibility. He noted that the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries -- which is responsible for coordinating both conscientious objection registration and counseling -- had received many inquiries since President Carter raised the issue of registration in his State of the Union address in January.

This increasing time demand and the need to bring pastoral counseling material up to date were balanced by the Council against the uncertain future of the draft and draft registration in deciding to give the Administrative Group the final authority in shaping the response.

-more-

Although this resolution passed easily and with very little debate, a second resolution addressing policy was only approved on a 19-17 division after a long debate.

That resolution was introduced by the Council's Standing Committee on National Mission in Church and Society and declares that registration without conscription would not contradict Church policy, but that conscription without a congressionally declared national emergency would.

The resolution was opposed by Council members who felt it restricted the intent of the Convention action and by others who felt it left no room to support those who conscientiously objected to the concept of registration as well as to conscription.

Council member Paul Neuhauser of Iowa led the opposition, claiming that the House of Deputies committee had every intention that the original resolution cover registration: that they believed the Church should oppose registration without a declared national emergency. He was opposed by others who had been deputies who claimed that that intent was not apparent on the House floor.

Council member the Rev. Denis O'Pray of Minnesota called the resolution unnecessary and stated that it was "an end run" around the previous action.

#####

DP, DX, B, PR, PS

NOTE: The texts of the two resolutions are attached.

RESOLUTION ON THE PRESENT CONSCRIPTION SITUATION

At Denver in September, 1979, General Convention adopted the following resolution:

"Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that this 66th General Convention of the Episcopal Church asserts its opposition to peacetime conscription or any form of compulsory national service unless a national emergency is declared by the Congress."

It is our opinion that:

1. If citizens are required to register with a governmental agency without conscription having been enacted, such registration would not be contrary to the policy of the Episcopal Church as established by the resolution above; and
2. If thereafter conscription is enacted without an expressed declaration of a national emergency by the Congress, such enactment would be contrary to the policy of the Episcopal Church and should be opposed by the Church.

+ + + + +

RESPONSE TO DRAFT REGISTRATION

Resolved, that the Administrative Group be encouraged to coordinate and increase, to the extent necessary, the response to the 66th General Convention's resolution concerning counseling for young persons if faced with the resumption of draft registration or the draft.

EXPLANATION

1. The following resolution was passed by the 66th General Convention:

"Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that this 66th General Convention encourages young Episcopalians who consider themselves to be conscientious objectors to war to register that belief with The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church in the Register maintained for this purpose since 1940 and with the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors; and be it further

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that this 66th General Convention acknowledges this Church's ministry to provide pastoral counseling for young persons if faced with a resumption of the draft or draft registration; and be it further

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that this 66th General Convention calls upon the Executive Council to provide adequate resources to implement and maintain an on-going program of draft counseling for young people if faced with a resumption of the draft."

2. Since the President's State of the Union message, January 23, 1980, the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries has had many requests for assistance from individual young people, clergy, chaplains, bishops, and diocesan staff; each different and requiring considerable time.
3. There is a need to identify local resource people, assess ecumenical resources, and formulate materials and an approach appropriate to the Episcopal Church, helpful to families as well as the young.
4. The intention is to give balanced, objective, impartial counsel.
5. The future remaining uncertain as to the draft, this resolution is designed to give flexibility to the Administrative Group to respond quickly and appropriately. The Administrative Group has indicated that funding on a short-term basis would not be a problem.

#####

DP, DX, B, PR, PS

